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ENERGY PLEASE PASS TO NNSA/GTRI, ABIENIAWSKI

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ENRG](#) [PARM](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [KGIC](#) [RO](#)

SUBJECT: ROMANIA: HEU FREE ZONE

REF: 08 BUCHAREST 595

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¶1. (U) Summary: All remaining highly enriched uranium (HEU) was safely removed from Romania following the successful conclusion of a National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) operation under the Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI) on June 29th. This shipment removed Russian-origin HEU from two sites in Romania. The first involved 30 kilograms of unused HEU stored at a research reactor near Pitesti, while the second shipment was of 23.7 kilograms of spent fuel stored at a decommissioned reactor site just outside of Bucharest in Magurele. Both shipments were noteworthy in that they were sent by air under normal operating conditions, a first for the GTRI program. Except for a last-minute paperwork glitch, preparation for the shipments was flawless and they occurred under the highest possible safety conditions. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Reftel reported on preparation for the June 29th shipment, which began over one year ago, at the same time that U.S.-origin HEU was being removed from Romania. Since that time, NNSA technical staff and contractors have been regular visitors to Bucharest, helping to finalize paperwork and coordinate all aspects of the shipment. Project Technical Advisor and Idaho National Laboratory employee Ken Allen should be particularly commended for his efforts to keep post fully briefed on all aspects of the shipment. His attention to detail and patient coordination with the Romanian Government not only ensured the HEU shipments went smoothly, it bolstered our bilateral relationship.

¶3. (SBU) The only glitch in an otherwise smooth operation occurred when the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff noted a potential legal problem in the way the consignor was referred to in the Romanian-Russian Memorandum of Understanding. The Romanian Nuclear Regulatory Authority (CNCAN) informed EconOff about the concern late in the afternoon of June 25th, expressing surprise that we had not been told about the issue earlier. Post quickly mobilized to ensure that top Romanian policymakers in the Foreign Ministry and Presidency fully understood the gravity of the situation and the importance the U.S. Government put on quickly resolving the legal issues and completing the shipment. Our intervention helped facilitate a favorable outcome to what the President of CNCAN later told EconOff was really a political, not a legal, issue.

¶4. (U) The shipment itself involved placing the HEU inside transfer casks approved for air transport and then loading these casks into specially modified standard shipping containers. These containers were brought by truck to the Henry Coanda International "Otopeni" Airport during heavy rain and under a tight security umbrella on the evening of Sunday, June 28th. At the airport, the fresh fuel and spent fuel were loaded onto an IL-76 and Antonov 124, respectively. Except for a short delay related to weather at the final destination, the transfer of the material and flight went smoothly.

15. (SBU) Comment. Romania's support of the GTRI program and willingness to use the heretofore untried air-shipment option should be commended. In joining the ranks of HEU-free countries, Romania underlined its commitment to pursuing our shared non-proliferation goals. End Comment.

GUTHRIE-CORN